

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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FM AMEMBASSY TEGUCIGALPA

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EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS - DECLAS INDETERMINATE

TAGS: PFOR, HO

SUBJECT: GOH RESUMPTION OF TRADE WITH CUBA

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 3210

SUMMARY. FONMIN BATRES HAS ASKED FOR INFORMAL REACTIONS FROM THE USG IN REGARD TO HONDURAS RESUMING COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA. THE HONDURAN INITIATIVE IS BASED UPON A DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION WHICH THE GOH BELIEVES WOULD BE HELPED BY TRADE WITH CUBA AND UPON THE GENERAL CHANGE OF ATTITUDE TAKING PLACE IN LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES IN REGARD TO CUBA. THE EMBASSY RECOMMENDS THAT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO TELL THE GOH THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE APPLICATION OF OAS SANCTIONS SHOULD RESULT FROM THE COLLECTIVE ACTION OF ALL OAS MEMBER STATES. END SUMMARY.

REFTEL REPORTED THAT FORMIN BATRES ASKED THE EMBASSY FOR USG INFORMAL REACTIONS CONCERNING POSSIBLE RESUMPTION OF HONDURAN TRADE WITH CUBA, MAINLY IN MEAT AND WOOD. BATRES STATED THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF RENEWED TRADE IS NOT BEING DISCUSSED WITH CUBA AT PRESENT.

2. A SIMILAR SITUATION DEVELOPED IN JANUARY 1973 WHEN MINFIN ACOSTA BONILLA BROUGHT UP QUESTION OF POSSIBLE USG REACTION TO HONDURAS REESTABLISHING COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA. DEPARTMENT INSTRUCTED EMBASSY TO INFORM

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HONDURAN LEADERS THAT THE USG HOPES HONDURAS AGREES WITH

THE US THAT ANY CHANGE IN THE APPLICATION OF OAS SANCTIONS SHOULD ONLY RESULT FROM COLLECTIVE ACTION BY ALL OAS MEMBER STATES AFTER THE OAS DECIDES THAT CUBA IS NO LONGER A THREAT TO THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF THE HEMISPHERE. AMBASSADOR RYAN DISCUSSED THE MATTER WITH FONMIN BATRES IN JANUARY 1973 WHO SAID THAT THE SUGGESTION BY ACOSTA DID NOT REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OR CHIEF OF STATE LOPEZ. BATRES SAID THAT THE GOH HAD NO FORMAL PLANS FOR ANY COMMERCIAL OR POLITICAL INITIATIVES IN REGARD TO CUBA. ACOSTA SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THAT THE IDEA HAD BEEN ENTIRELY HIS AND THAT HE HAD NOT CONSULTED LOPEZ ON THE MATTER.

3. COMMENT: UNDOUBTEDLY THE QUESTION HAS ASSUMED GREATER IMPORTANCE FROM THE GOH VIEWPOINT BECAUSE OF ITS DIFFICULT ECONOMIC SITUATION. AS BATRES TOLD US, THE ECONOMY IS SUFFERING FROM WORLD-WIDE INFLATION AND DECLINING AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS. THE GOVERNMENT PROBABLY BELIEVES THAT THEY WOULD BE ABLE TO SELL TIMBER AND MEAT TO CUBA ON A FAVORABLE TRADE BASIS. THE FIGURES FOR 1958, 1959 AND 1960 INDICATE THAT HONDURAS HAD A SIZEABLE SURPLUS IN ITS COMMERCIAL DEALINGS WITH CUBA DURING THAT PERIOD, AND THE GOH PROBABLY SEES CUBAN TRADE AS A PARTIAL ANSWER TO ITS ECONOMIC DIFFICULTIES. (IT IS, HOWEVER, DOUBTFUL WHETHER CUBA WOULD OFFER MUCH BEYOND BARTER DEALS AT THE PRESENT TIME.) ANOTHER IMPORTANT FACTOR IS THAT THE GOH HAS BEEN INFLUENCED BY THE CHANGING ATTITUDE OF OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES TOWARD CUBA. BATRES HIMSELF POINTED OUT THE CHANGE IN THE VENEZUELAN POSITION AND THE U.S. DECISION TO PERMIT CAR EXPORTS FROM ARGENTINA. THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO REPEAT THE ARGUMENT USED IN EARLY 1973 IN AN ATTEMPT TO PERSUADE THE GOH FROM ADOPTING COMMERCIAL RELATIONS WITH CUBA.
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